

**The Nexus of Educational Policies on Access and  
Reduction of Poverty in Sub – Saharan African  
(SSA): The Case of Ghana**

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## ABSTRACT

*Overwhelming evidence demonstrates that education breaks the circle of poverty, halts the spread of inequality and creates sustainable development. However, education is expensive, and educational facilities are capital intensive, creating insurmountable barriers to access in Africa. The desire to break the circle of poverty led to the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in 1995, resulting in the UN General Assembly declaring the period 1997 to 2006 as the First UN Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. This was followed by the April 2000, Dakar framework for action where participants pledge to commit themselves to the achievement of education for all (EFA). The Millennium Development Goal 2 went a step further to request from countries to adopt universal primary education by 2015 in order to reduce poverty. In light of these, many African Countries began to create and implement Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP) with some establishing offices to plan and monitor poverty reduction policies. This study assesses how various policies on access to education influenced poverty reduction in Ghana. The researchers collected both primary and secondary data for this study. The findings suggest an inverse relationship between policies on access to education and the incidence of poverty in Ghana. Indeed at a higher level of education, the chances of a person being non-poor increase and the paper indicates that being a public servant provides an advantage in retaining a position above the poverty line as compared to the people employed in the agricultural sector. To eradicate poverty and create sustainable development, this research validates the need for Ghana to place a significant emphasis on access to both primary and secondary education by providing infrastructure, free education, and training for teachers at the various level of education.*

**Key words:** *Ghana, poverty reduction, education, agriculture sector, sustainable development, Sub-Saharan Africa.*

## **I. Introduction**

The end of the Trio-Crisis in Africa, namely Colonialism (1960s), Cold War (1998) and Apartheid (1994), whose combined effects were perceived by many African countries to have denied them from achieving their desired political and socio- economic growth (Ikejiaku, 2009), culminated to inequality and poverty on the continent. These challenges of the new era led to low income, illiteracy and diseases, resulting in extreme poverty that diminished any rational expectations of sustainable development and economic prosperity at the start of the new Millennium. The innumerable and insurmountable effects of these crises have left Africa extremely poorer when compared to other continents. While poverty is a global phenomenon, it is now Africa's middle name. Currently, with about 1.3 billion extremely poor people in the world, about 280 million reside in Africa (UN, 2009). This increased to 330 million in 2012 (World Bank, 2016). Indeed, out of Sub – Sahara Africa's (SSA) 719 million population, approximately 50 percent live in extreme poverty – when measured by less than one U.S. dollar per day (World Bank, 2005). The term poverty evolves and often defined in relation to income, lack of material or want and capability deprivation poverty (UNDP, 2006; Chambers 2006:3-4; Ikejiaku, 2009).

However, United Nations (UN) indicated that the most effective remedy for extreme poverty is universal primary education and have listed it as MDG two, which should be used to eradicate extreme poverty by 2015 (UNDP, 2005). Unfortunately, two years after the expiration of the MDG targeted year of 2015, extreme poverty and hunger still remain and constitute a formidable challenge to various countries in Africa. As a result, out of the US\$72 billion debt reduction package approved for the 36 countries classified as Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) in the world, 32 of them are in Africa (Misam, 2011; IMF, 2011).

The severity of poverty in Africa has resulted in poor infrastructure development, famine, epidemics and military intervention in government. These developments make Africa the first home of humanity but the last to be free from poverty, inequality, hunger and disease.

Ghana, a SSA country is poor despite its natural resources endowment of gold, diamond, manganese and a large deposit of hydrocarbon. Currently, the nation serves as a model in democratic governance in Africa with well over twenty-four years of consistent practice of democracy.

Despite the wealth bequeathed to Ghanaians and its democratic credentials, Ghana's buoyant economy after independence was bust in 1983 with the debt stock of US\$1,820 billion and 123 percent Inflation (Economic Commission for Africa, 2003). Ghana's poor economic performance during these periods was the result of the political instabilities in the 1960's that resulted in five military governments from 1966 to 1981 because of poor salary structure (Addae-Mensah, I at al., 1973). This led to mass exodus of trained and experienced teachers of Ghana and any skilled and unskilled portions of the work force to Europe and the United States with the majority ended up in Nigeria to take advantage of the emergent petrochemical industry. Indeed, the 1979–1980 global recessions and the 1982/83 droughts in Sub-Saharan Africa, which led to the spread of wild bushfires, worsened the plight of Ghanaians. The deportation of 1.5 million undocumented Ghanaian nationals back to their country of origin by Shehu Shagari's government of Nigeria in 1983 aggravated the domestic situation in Ghana (Boafo-Arthur, 1999). These situations led the Ghanaian government to institute minimum price legislation policy, which resulted in the hoarding of essential commodities, profiteering, and black marketing among the business communities.

To liberate the masses from the clutches of poverty, the military government dispatched the members of its economic management team to socialist allies abroad such as China, Cuba and the former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) to solicit economic assistance. To

the amazement of the Rawling's governing Provisional National Defense Council (PNDC), the various delegations returned home empty handed (Dzidza P., 2017). Without this help, the Ghanaian government had inadequate means to address the economic debacle. The situation resulted in the IMF and the World Bank implementing economic austerity policies in Ghana; hence, the introduction of Structural Adjustment Policy (SAP) in April 1983.

The SAP, among others, imposed a number of conditions, including reduction in government spending, devaluation of domestic currency to promote export and tariff reduction, and attempts to increase private and public savings. This led to the government reducing spending on education that, in turn, brought on the downward spiral in education.

To rescue the falling standard of education that bedevilled the SSA countries, the UN indicated that countries in the region should spend more than 20 percent of their annual budgets on education. In addition to this mandate, the government of Ghana implemented many policies and programs to help improve educational standards and access to education. Notable among them are Ghana Poverty Reduction Strategy 2002-2004 (GPRS I, February 2002), the Education Sector Policy Review Report (ESPRR, August 2002), the Education Sector Review (ESR, October 2002), Meeting the Challenges of Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Education for All (EFA, UNESCO, Dakar, 2000) and the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2003-2015.

Years after the implementation of the various educational reform programs coupled with the review policies, Ghanaians expected a drastic expansion in educational infrastructure, which will inure to the reduction in illiteracy rate and in the end reduce the level of extreme poverty that engulfed the nation. Unfortunately, those anticipated results did not materialise fully as illiteracy and poverty has remained high after many years of policy intervention by the government (Gaventa, 2004; Meth and Dias, 2004; UNDP, 2003; UNDP, 2005). In light of this, the paper investigates the effects of government policy on provision of infrastructure and

access to education and its resultant influence on poverty reduction in Ghana. Section II briefly chronicles the development of education in Ghana. Section III reviews the literature using educational access as a tool for poverty reduction. Section IV discusses the impact of access to education on poverty in Ghana and finally, Section V concludes the paper as well as suggests areas for further research.

## **II. The development of education in Ghana**

### ***a. The colonial era***

In 1482, the first Portuguese merchants arrived in the Gold Coast (part of present-day Ghana) and settled at Elmina. They later established the castle schools in this city in 1529. This western-style education helped train children of important chiefs and wealthy African merchants. This included the mulattoes - children of European merchants who married African women. They primarily educated the children in reading and writing (McWilliam 1962; Graham, 1971).

The arrival of the missionaries with the need to create an independent native church changed the focus of education in the Gold Coast. They needed a well-educated staff to serve as local assistants. This development led the Dutch to evict the Portuguese from the Elmina castle. They opened their first school in 1644. The British followed by establishing a school in nearby Cape Coast Castle while the Danes did the same at Christiansburg Castle in Accra.

By 1874, available evidence indicates that significant progress in the educational sector took place with the Basel and Wesleyan Mission schools scattered across the country. Graham (1971) indicates that by 1881 about 139 schools existed in the Gold Coast. This encompassed the one school in Cape Coast and two in Accra under the management of the British Colonial

administration. Additionally, the Basel mission established 47 schools; the Wesleyans, 84; the Bremen Mission, 4; and the Roman Catholic Church, 1.

The development of education in the Gold Coast unfolded with difficulty because of ideological differences of the missionaries. To harmonise the educational system, a General Board of Education and Local Boards were established. By 1887, an updated ordinance was passed and, in 1890, the government and missionaries created a full Director of Education for the Gold Coast resulting in a total enrolment of 5,076, including 1,037 girls.

To make education accessible, the Gold Coast government appointed a local committee to deliberate on the requirements of education in 1920. In all, the committee recommended three additional new institutions: a secondary school, a new government training college for male teachers and a training college for female teachers. Not satisfied with the 1920 recommendation, the Governor of the Gold Coast, Sir Gordon Guggisberg, set up the 1922 Committee to debate further on education. He indicated that the government could not afford the three separate institutions recommended by the 1920 Committee.

Further, the Second World War adversely affected education in the Gold Coast. The European school inspectors, principals and teachers who played an active service in the provision of education in the Gold Coast were mobilized for military service. This opened a way for the appointment of the first African Deputy Director of Education, Mr. V.A. Tettey. He broadened the scope of education as a poverty reduction tool to help liberate the citizens from the crutches of poverty. He therefore facilitated the expansion of access by opening of many educational facilities and, by 1950; he established approximately 3,000 primary and secondary schools with an enrolment figure of 280,960. This constituted about 6.6% of the total population of 4.2 million (Addae-Mensah, I, 1973). By 1952, the Nkrumah government affirmed the place of education as a major instrument of national development and introduced a policy of education for all.



***b. The Post-Independence era***

Despite the numerous policies on access to education implemented during the pre-colonial area, illiteracy among Ghanaians remained high with only about 20 percent considered to have any form of education. The uneven distribution of educational facilities with most of the schools located in the south left the northern part of the country poorer than the south. Many consider this disparity to be a major contributor to the high literacy rate in Ghana.

In 1961, the Education Act of 87 established Local Education Authorities with the responsibility to build maintain and equip all public primary and middle schools in their jurisdictions. Further, the Act instituted the Accelerated Development Plan (ADP) that advocated for the massive expansion and provision of primary and middle school education. Additional provisions included the introduction of tuition fee-free primary education (namely, Universal Primary Education [UPE]) into the policy discourse and, finally, six years at primary level, four years of middle school, five years of secondary and two years of sixth-form education for individuals.

After the implementation of ADP with the fee-free education policy (Addae-Mensah et al., 1973), statistics indicated that enrolment in public primary and middle schools more than doubled in the period 1960-1 to 1966-7. Unfortunately, by the early 1970s, only about five percent of those who entered primary and middle schools made the transition to the secondary school education for which tuition fees continued to be charged (Addae-Mensah et al., 1973).

The fee-free policy in primary schools, therefore, set up the context where the majority of students from elementary and the primary schools could not gain admission into the few existing secondary schools. This led to a fallen standard of education that bedevilled the

country in the middle 1960's. It also worsened the literacy level and, thereby, increased the rate of poverty. A *coup d'état* overthrew the government of the Convention Peoples Party (CPP) in 1966. A.A. Afrifa, a leading member of the coup, indicated that one of the reasons for the change in government was lack of access to higher and quality education that resulted in massive unemployment and the lowering of educational standards (Pedley and Taylor, 2009).

Soon after the *coup d'état*, the Education Review Committee led by Professor A.A. Kwapong looked into the educational system. After its investigation, the Committee recommended two years of middle school education. After completion of that stage, a portion of the students would be selected for the academic stream with the rest enrolled in a pre-vocational course for an additional two years in "continuation" classes. This would help students acquire skills to lift them out of poverty. Further, the Committee recommended the reduction of the nine years spent in basic school to six years at primary school with only four years of secondary education and two years of sixth form leading to three or more years at university.

Unfortunately, the poor implementation of Kwapong's Review Committee report led to the emergence of private schools. This made it impossible for public school graduates and those who passed the Common Entrance Examination (CEE) to enter the academic secondary stream directly while children from private schools easily made the transition to secondary school after only six or seven years of primary education (Addae-Mensah et al, 1973).

By 1972, statistics showed that about 21 percent of students from private primary schools were among the first thousand best performing students as compared to less than 1percent from fee-free government sponsored educational institutions (Addae-Mensah, I, 1973). This reality brought into question the quality of education in the government fee-free primary schools.

Two years later in 1974, the government established the Dzobo Committee on Education. They recommended a New Structure and Content of Education (NSCE). They proposed a common, diversified, extended basic education cycle in which all children followed a common curriculum for nine years: six years in primary, three in the newly established junior secondary schools (JSS), followed by four years of senior secondary (SSS) split into two stages of two years each. However, the Dzobo review committee's recommendations never saw the light of day. They were not implemented due to political instability leading to the June 1979 *coup d'état* headed by J. J. Rawlings. He later handed over the reins of government to an elected government in September 1979 after three months in office. However, economic hardship in Ghana continued resulting in the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1981 *coup d'état*, which witnessed the second coming of J. J. Rowling as the head of state.

To correct the poor economic condition inherited by J.J Rawlings' new Governing PNDC, they swiftly reacted by sending emissaries to its communist allies abroad. However, this failed to yield the expected result. Consequently, the government has no option than to embark on a project for economic austerity in April 1983. This led to the adoption of the Economic Recovery Program (ERP) as required and supported by the IMF and the WB (Pedley and Taylor, 2009).

The overarching aim for the adoption of the ERP was to reduce Ghana's debts and to improve its trading position in the global economy. The objectives of the program were among other to restore economic productivity at minimum cost to the government, lower inflation through stringent fiscal, monetary, and trade policies and to increase the flow of foreign exchange into Ghana and directing it to priority sectors. The rest are to restructure the country's economic institutions, restore production incentives, rehabilitate infrastructure to enhance production and export of goods and, finally, increase the availability of essential consumer goods.

Unfortunately, the wholesale implementation of the ERP has affected the educational system the more as it led to more deterioration of infrastructure and quality of education. For instance, enrolment rates, once among the highest in the Sub-Saharan region, stagnated and fell. In addition, the percentage of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) allocated to education also fell from 6.4 percent in 1976 to 1.7 percent. The real levels of financing fell by about two-thirds. Government resources were no longer available to construct, complete or maintain educational facilities (National Education Forum, 1999).

Further, the depletion of the country's foreign reserves led to scarcity of foreign exchange. This affected the country's ability to purchase textbooks and other teaching and learning materials for the schools. Finally, the economic downturn that afflicted the entire country forced a mass exodus of qualified teachers. At the basic education level, the ratio of trained to untrained teachers fell significantly. Low motivation and morale resulted in ineffective supervision. Finally, the lack of data and statistics needed for vital planning led to decisions taken on an *ad hoc* basis (National Education Forum, 1999:9).

The numerous problems plaguing the educational sector prompted a review of the Dzobo's educational policy report and the creation of a few new recommendations. The suggestions led to the promulgation of the PNDC Law 42. This legislation dissolved the Ghana Education Service Council and the National Council for Higher Education. Their powers were transferred to the PNDC Secretary for Education.

The government established the National Education Commission (NEC) in 1985 to review the educational system and to advise the PNDC Secretary of Education on the Dzobo Committee's report. NEC held extensive consultations across the entire country. In essence, the NEC's recommendations echoed Dzobo's 1974 Committee report.

In October 1986, the PNDC Secretary for Education and Culture announced the implementation of the new reform to begin in September 1987. These reforms were not piloted and were introduced nationwide “with less than a year’s lead time in order to prevent vested interests from mobilising against the reforms” (World Bank, 1989:2). This new reform was design to overcome many maladies related to educational access at the basic level and to improving the quality of education and learning. Wide in scope, this reform effort covered the entire education sector from primary to tertiary level. Four main types described these proposed changed: *Structure of Education, Curriculum, Expected Destinations of Graduates from Basic Education and Finance of Education*.

By 2015, *about* 12,000 primary schools, 5,500 junior secondary schools and 700 senior secondary schools had been established. Additional educational institutions included 18 technical institutions, 21 nurse-training colleges, three theological colleges, 20 university colleges, six tutorial colleges, 10 polytechnics and six public universities. The World Bank and the Department for International Development assisted the introduction of the new system. This changed the face of education in Ghana from purely academic to that of creating person - power needs aimed at increasing access to basic education, shortening the pre-university education structure from 17 to 12 years.

To drive the educational reform, the Ghanaian government created special motivation packages for teachers working in hard-to-reach and deprived communities plus the focused topics of maths and science as well as those in technical and vocational education. In addition, the School Report Card system and School Based Assessment process, aimed at ensuring effective school attendance were introduce. To achieve the MDG 2 and 3, article 38 of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana indicated that the first nine years of basic education should be free and compulsory (Free Compulsory Basic Education, FUCBE). By September 2005, the Ghana School Feeding Programme was launched.

Currently, the government has introduced the Ghana Educational Strategic Plan 2010-2020. This is to help implement many educational policies on access including capitation grants, free textbooks, free school uniforms and free school sandals in order to meet MDG 2 and the Education for All (EFA) Dakar Principles and to reduce extreme poverty. However, whether the policy interventions on access to education have yielded any significant impact on poverty reduction is yet to be known.

### **III. Literature review**

The human condition classified as poor has a long-standing history with a variety of interpretations. A number of factors influence these economic conditions, prominent among them are resources, contemporary standards and public perceptions of what is minimally acceptable (Dzidza P., et al 2016). The historical comments on poverty are also extraordinarily long, for example “Poverty in many ways strips individuals of their dignity, their sense of autonomy and their sense of worthiness” (The Chronicle, 2016) and many well-known quotes such as the Christian adage, “The poor will always be with you” (Matthew 26: 11).

People living in poverty experience numerous similar characteristics, for instance, on a daily basis, they encounter an unacceptable poor standard of living due to this unjust economic condition. Until recently, poverty has remained a social problem. Nonetheless, Adam Smith (1776) is among the eighteenth-century pioneers who proposed a conceptual definition of poverty as missing “not only the commodities which are indispensably necessary for the support of life, but whatever the custom of the country, renders it indecent for creditable people, even of the lowest order, to be without” (Shillington et al., 2009). Currently, the concept of poverty is defined as anyone who is marginalised, vulnerable,

excluded or deprived and lacking command over basic consumption needs, including food and non –food components (UNDP, 2006).

The overwhelming evidence of extreme poverty, especially in SSA, led to the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development in 1995. They redefined extreme poverty to include severe injustice and an abuse of human rights. As a result, the United Nations General Assembly declared the period 1997 to 2006 as the First United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty. The April 2000 World Education Forum that was held in Dakar Senegal was followed with Education framework for All (EFA), a clarion call from the international community to eradicate extreme poverty. By September 2000 at the Millennium Summit, over 189 heads of governments gathered in New York and endorsed the world's time-bound and quantified targets for reducing extreme poverty in its numerous dimensions in the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). These ranged from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and promoting universal primary education, all by 2015.

At the end of the Millennium Summit, the World Bank (WB) built into their headquarters' lobby walls the slogan, "Our dream is a world free of poverty," symbolising their commitment to poverty reduction. In April 2001, the WB's President and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued a joint statement declaring poverty "the greatest challenge facing the international community" (World Bank and International Monetary Fund 2001, 2; William Easterly, 2003).

In contemporary times, poverty has become a threat to life, peace and stability, especially in SSA, but also to democratic governance. Indeed, no government can boast of stability and peace in the midst of extreme poverty, inequality and squalor. According to the United Nations, SSA is the home to over 93 percent of the world's poorest people (UNDP, 2010).

To alleviate extreme poverty, the UN requested from poor countries to adopt various economic policies including education as a tool to alleviate poverty (MDG, 2001). Education serves as an avenue for people to gain employment in more secure jobs as well as provides good working conditions and decent pay. Additionally, it increases the welfare of individuals and creates income opportunities for the poor. Hence, attaining a purposeful and relevant education can transform lives, lift households out of poverty and guard them against falling back into poverty.

According to Cohen and Soto (2007) as well as Barro and Lee (2010), the initial years of schooling and change in years of schooling have a significant positive impact on the income growth of individuals. Indeed, the Integrated Labour Force Survey conducted in 2000-1 reinforces the above argument, indicating that primary school graduates earn about double the wages of those with no formal education.

To support the views above, UNESCO (2013) indicated that if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills, world poverty would decrease by 12 percent. Similarly, the World Bank postulates that when considering experience, location and gender, a wage earner with primary education earns 75 percent more than someone with no primary education, whereas a secondary school graduate earns 163 percent more (WHO, 2004).

In the literature, many authors on the subject outline the effects of education on poverty using cross-country data. In most cases, the findings have found a positive correlation between education and poverty (Fakuse, 2010; Nelson and Phelps; 2006, Gyimah-Brempong et al., 2006; Ciccone and Papaionnou, 2009; Mamoon and Murshed, 2009). Others have used time series data (de la Croix et al., 2008) and cross state data within a country (Baldwin and Borrelli, 2008) to investigate the effects of access of education policies on poverty. These findings indicate a positive relationship between education and income, growth and poverty. Additionally, they found improvements in technology and health as well as increased savings



and investments provide evidence for poverty reduction (Growei, 2010). However, despite the fact that researchers have considered these various relationships between poverty reduction and education, none has evaluated the access of education on poverty reduction.

Indeed, the importance of education cannot be over emphasised. For instance, children of parents perceived to be poor are less likely to receive a good education.. In their research, Blanden and Gibbons (2006) established a correlation between poverty and success in mid-life. They indicate that, controlling for qualifications, people in their 30s who experienced financial hardship when growing up are less likely to do well in the labour market as compared to their counterparts who did not experience financial hardship as children and teens. Therefore, they conclude that the relationship between poverty and low achievement at school is just part of a wider cycle in which families pass on this disadvantage from one generation to the next.

To accelerate poverty reduction in SSA, various governments have embarked on fee-free basic education policies (Chege et al., 2015). To sustain this policy, the IMF and the WB require that every government in the developing world spend at least 26 percent of their annual budget on education (Oseni, 2012). As a result, education in the SSA has received a substantial portion of the national budget every year. For instance, one of South Africa's budget statements shows that 20 percent of government expenditure was allocated to education in 2014-15 a 19.7 percent increase from the previous fiscal year (SAnews.gov.za, 2014). The experience in Ghana is similar. The government has continuously increased its budget allocation for education from GH1.7billion in 2010 to GH4.4billion in 2013. This further increased to GH5.8billion in 2014 and GH6.7billion in 2015, representing about 21 percent of the national budget (Erasmus, 2015).

In spite of the implementation of the fee-free education policy supported by an increased budgeted allocation for education, many SSA countries still appear to be poorer. For instance,

Swaziland, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Kenya and Zimbabwe are countries where poverty seems to be increasing (Arimah, 2004; Mualuko, 2007; Polelo, 2003; Sithole, 2005). The poor state of many SSA countries is worrying when considering the massive expansion in the educational sector. According to Marke (2007), more than one third of people in SSA live without access to proper health care and hygiene facilities while 47 percent do not have safe drinking water. Ali Mazrui (in Fapohunda, 2002) aptly describes the unexplainable poor economic conditions in Africa. He notes that Africa, the first home of humankind, but the last to be truly inhabitable due to poverty. The continuously poor state of SSA in general and Ghana in particular raises several questions regarding the credibility in the various policies implemented in collaboration with their development partners, especially the Dakar principle on education and the MDG goals on education and extreme poverty reduction.

#### **IV. Research method**

Ghana, one of the towering SSA countries, is located along the Atlantic Ocean. The country's land mass comprises 238,535 km square bordered on the west by Ivory Coast, north by Burkina Faso, east by Togo and the Atlantic Ocean in the south. With a population density of 111 people per square kilometer, this multi-cultural nation has population of over 25 million people (GSS, 2012) with a variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups.

The economy of Ghana is relatively buoyant, one of the strongest and most diversified in the SSA. Because of relative peace, stability and good governance, Ghana has attained an enviable position as a regional power in the western part of Africa leading to accelerated development in education and poverty reduction.

The Ministry of Education (ME) has political responsibility for education in Ghana. As its agent, the Ghana Education Service implements policies and programs in line with primary

and secondary education as formulated by the ME. The city of Accra serves as their headquarters. Decentralization ensures effective policy implementation with 10 regional and 138 district offices. Both levels are tasked with executing the national policies and legislation in order to promote formal and informal education among Ghanaians. These include the Ghana Education Act, 1961; New Structure and Content of Education, 1974; Education Commission Report on Basic and Secondary Education, 1987-88 and Education Reform Programme, 1987-88. Additional ones are the University Renationalisation Committee Report, 1988; Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) Programme, 1996 and Ghana Education Trust Fund – GET Fund Act 2000.

To investigate the impact of education policy on poverty in Ghana, the researchers of this study collected primary and secondary data. In terms of the primary data, two people were selected from each region in Ghana using purposive sampling. Interviews were conducted using interview schedules. In all, we chose twenty people.

In addition, the researchers analysed data from the 2010 Education Sector Performance Report collected by the Ministry of Education. This information includes the number of kindergartens, Primary, Junior High Secondary (JHS) and Senior High Secondary (SHS) established by the government of Ghana and the private sector in order to increase access. In terms of poverty, we utilized data from the sixth Ghana Living Standard Survey (GLSS 6). The GLSS provides incidence of poverty by level of education of household heads, employment status of household heads, and poverty and educational level of the head of household. This project examines these three characteristics.

## **V. Findings and Discussion**

### ***a. The effect of educational policy on access at the kindergarten level of education in Ghana.***

The literature clearly indicates that one of the bottlenecks in the provision of education in Ghana is access. This was collaborated by Emmanuel (pseudonym), one of the Directors interviewed in Accra. He indicates that before the 2010-2020 education policy, access and participation of female children in education remained daunting tasks. Addressing access and gender disparities, Akpama (pseudonym) was succinct to the point when he mentioned that cultural beliefs in Ghana play a major role as a girl child is supposed to receive tutorials and training on how to manage their marital home in the future. They teach them to be serviceable to their husbands and to provide domestic help to both their husbands and their parents. In terms of access, Sebu, one of the directors, pointed to the distance a student must travel before accessing an educational facility. He indicated that in most rural areas, access to a school is a daunting task. Children must walk miles and, in some cases, cross one or two rivers. This development discourages many parents from encouraging their girl children from going to school.

To bridge the gender equity gap, various government policies deliberately remove the barriers that prevent girls' enrolment into formal educational system (Interview data, 2017). School timetables also became more flexible in areas where girls are expected to carry out domestic chores at home. Further, various governments have reviewed gender stereotyping that discriminate against girls from all textbooks and a unit was created to facilitate support for girls in the learning of science and technology (interview data, 2017). According to the interviewee, selective scholarship packages introduced over the years to target girls from poor households along with vacation camps organised to encourage girls to continue schooling, helped facilitate the above factors. In fact, the slogan "what men can do, women can do it better" became a motivational factor among parents leading to increased enrolment of girls in formal educational system.

In terms of infrastructure, the government of Ghana in 2008 bemoaned the poor infrastructure facilities on various basic schools. In response, they made a policy to remove schools under trees and eliminated the shift system that have characterised the educational system in Ghana over the years. In 2012, the government indicated that it has constructed 1,775 schools to replace over 4,000 schools under trees it inherited from the previous administration (Mahama, J., 2013). According to Emmanuel, to improve access to education, the government of Ghana in collaboration with its development partners introduced the capitation grant in 2005 to fund non-salary expenditures in schools based on enrolments. This aimed at eliminating the need for schools to charge tuition and other fees.

To determine if the access policies to education implemented in Ghana by various governments have yielded any meaningful result, this research collected data on the number of kindergartens, primary and the JHS established in Ghana and their enrolment figures from 2003/4 to 2009/10. From the data, we noted that there were 7,009 public and private kindergarten schools operating in Ghana in 2004/5 (Education Sector Performance Report, 2010). This comprised 1,804 and 5,205 private and public sector kindergarten schools, respectively. In 2005/6, 3,722 kindergarten schools were established to add to the existing 7,009, raising the number to 10,731. This figure includes 7,818 public and 2,913 private kindergarten schools. In 2006/7, the number improved further to 14,246 with the public sector alone adding about 2,375 to the national stock. Many factors contributed to this development. Among them are the capitation grant, the school feeding program introduced by the government and the elimination of schools under trees policies. This is evident in the subsequent years as the number of kindergartens continued to increase from 7,009 in 2004/5 to 15,449 in 2007/8. By the end of 2010, the number of kindergarten schools increased from 16,439 in 2008/9 to 17,471 in 2009/10 as indicated in Table 1 below.

**Table 1.** Number of kindergarten schools in Ghana (2004/5 – 2009/10)

<b>Type of Education</b>	<b>2004/5</b>	<b>2005/6</b>	<b>2006/7</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Public</b>	5,205	7,818	10,193	11,140	11,827	12,481
<b>Private</b>	1,804	2,913	4,053	4,309	4,612	4,990
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,009</b>	<b>10,731</b>	<b>14,246</b>	<b>15,449</b>	<b>16,439</b>	<b>17,471</b>

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2010*

In addition to the increased number of kindergartens in Ghana, enrolment into these schools has more than doubled. For instance, in 2003/04, the total enrolment figure in all the kindergartens in Ghana was 687,643. This increased to 778,109 in 2004/05. In 2008/09, 1,338,454 kids enrolled. This has increased by 7.7 percent to 1,440,732 in 2009/10. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER), the number of students enrolled in school at different grades, also increased significantly after 2003/04 with the highest increment occurring from 2004/05 to 2005/06 with a percentage change of 25.2 percent. Since then, the GER has continued growing at a slow rate, recording about 92.90 percent in 2008/09 and 97.30 percent in 2009/10 respectively, as indicated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Enrolment of kindergarten students in Ghana (2003/04 – 2009/10)

<b>Education Type</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Enrolment</b>	687,643	778,109	1,065,963	1,142,784	1,262,264	1,338,454	1,440,732
<b>Gross Enrolment (%)</b>	54.6	60.1	85.3	89.0	89.9	92.9	97.3
<b>Private Enrolment (%)</b>	31.2	36.8	29.4	18.9	17.1	19.4	19.5

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2010*

Thus, the data shows that the percentage enrolment of children into public kindergartens in Ghana is increasing. This is a result of deliberate government policies to have each public primary school attached to a kindergarten. The continuous increase in the enrolment figures at the kindergarten level suggests that the various educational policies in relation to access have been successful. For instance the school feeding program, capitation grant, free school textbook and sandals have yielded the requisite result as the country inches towards achieving

the MDG 2. As stated in MDG 2, this allows children everywhere to have the opportunity to complete a full course of primary schooling while the country simultaneously works to eradicate extreme poverty.

***b. The effect of education policy on access to primary schools education***

In terms of primary schools in Ghana, data from the 2010 Educational Sector Performance Report reveal that the number of public and private primary schools increased since 2003/04. For instance, their number rose from 15,417 in 2005/06 to 18,579 in 2009/10, growing by 9 percent within the period. The above increase comprised 12,427 public schools in 2005/06 to 13,835 in 2009/10. In terms of private schools, that number expanded from 2,990 in 2005/06 to 3,810 in 2006/07. This increased further to 4,744 in 2009/10, indicating continuous increases in public and private primary education in Ghana as indicated in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Number of primary schools in Ghana (2005/06 – 2009/10)

<b>Types of Education</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Public</b>	12,427	13,093	13,247	13,510	13,835
<b>Private</b>	2,990	3,810	4,068	4,371	4,744
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,417</b>	<b>16,903</b>	<b>17,315</b>	<b>17,881</b>	<b>18,579</b>

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2010*

Regarding enrolment into primary schools in Ghana, as observed from Table 4, private and public school enrolment increased steadily. For example, public and private primary schools in Ghana in 2003/04 admitted 2,957,491 students (2,418,696 in public school, 538,795 in private schools). These enrolment figures increased to 3,809,258 in 2009/10 which constituted 3,099,234 public schools students and 710, 024 private school students. As indicated in Table 4, GER increased steadily from 86.5 percent to 92.1 percent from 2003/04 to 2005/06. The rate of increase then slowed and plateaued in 2008/09 and 2009/10 with a figure of 94.9 percent.

**Table 4.** Primary school enrolment in Ghana (2003/04 – 2009/10)

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Enrolment Total</b>	2,957,491	3,077,489	3,111,753	3,473,229	3,622,724	3,710,647	3,809,258
<b>Enrolment Public</b>	2,418,696	2,455,913	2,727,044	2,870,656	2,990,782	3,041,895	3,099,234
<b>Enrolment Private</b>	538,795	631,576	489,546	692,573	531,942	668,752	710,024
<b>GER (%)</b>	86.5	87.5	92.1	93.7	95.2	94.9	94.9

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2010*

***c. The impact of education policy on the number of JHS and their enrolment figures***

In terms of JHS education in Ghana, the trend is not different as government and private sectors continue to provide educational infrastructure across the length and breadth of the country in order to improve literacy levels. For instance, in 2005/06, 8,749 JHS were in Ghana. This comprised 1,619 private and 7,130 public JHS. However, in 2006, 585 JHS were added to the existing 2005/06 figure, increasing to 9,334, 7,251 public and 2,083 private schools as indicated in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Number of JHS schools in Ghana (2005/06 – 2009/10)

<b>Type of Education</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Public</b>	7,130	7,251	7,267	7,656	7,969
<b>Private</b>	1,619	2,083	2,240	2,240	2,799
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,749</b>	<b>9,334</b>	<b>9,507</b>	<b>10,213</b>	<b>10,768</b>

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2010*

By the end of 2009/10, the total number of JHS in Ghana rose from 10,213 to 10,768. These schools were built to admit graduates from the 18,579 primary schools recorded in Ghana. In terms of enrolment into the JHS, a constant increment took place in the number of students enrolled in the various JHSs in Ghana. For instance, in 2003/04 the various JHS in Ghana admitted about 984,111 graduates from primary schools. Additionally, 155,594 students enrolled in private JHS with 828,517 gaining admission into public JHSs. By 2005/06, the enrolment figure into JHSs increased to 1,121,887 and finally to 1,301,940 as indicated in Table 6..



**Table 6.** Enrolment trend in JHS schools in Ghana (2003/04 – 2009/10)

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>2003/04</b>	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>	<b>2008/09</b>	<b>2009/10</b>
<b>Enrolment Total</b>	984,111	1,048,367	1,121,887	1,170,801	1,224,964	1,285,577	1,301,940
<b>Enrolment Public</b>	828,517	853,230	951,573	969,351	1,015,491	1,064,088	1,075,036
<b>Enrolment Private</b>	155,594	195,137	170,214	201,450	209,473	221,489	226,906
<b>GER (%)</b>	70.2	72.8	74.7	77.4	78.8	80.6	79.5

*Source: Education Sector Performance Report, 2010*

From 2008/09 to 2009/10 figures, a -1.4% decrease took place in the Gross Enrolment Ratio in JHSs in Ghana. GER decreased from 80.6 percent in 2008/09 to 79.5 percent in 2009/10. Despite this reduction, the actual enrolment figures in the public and private sectors increased tremendously from 2008/09 to 2009/10. For example, though the public school enrolment grew marginally from 1,064,088 to 1,075,036 in 2008/09 and 2009/10, the private sector showed different results. Enrolment there also grew from 221,489 in 2008/09 to 226,906 in 2009/10. Additionally, the total enrolment during that period increased by 16,363 from 1,285,577 in 2008/09 to 1,301,940 in 2009/10, suggesting that enrolment in education in Ghana continuously progresses.

## **VI. Education policy and its impact on poverty reduction in Ghana**

To determine the impact of the various policies of education on poverty in Ghana, this research used statistical figures collated and published by the Ghana Statistical Service on select poverty indicators. The chosen ones include incidence of poverty by the level of education, the incidence of poverty by employment status and the poverty and educational level of household heads.

### *a. Incidence of poverty by level of education of household heads*

From the literature, education is one of the factors that determine the level of poverty. Based on this, the government of Ghana came out with many policies and programs on education, which they believed would speed up the reduction of poverty in Ghana. However, whether these policies and programs have made any significant impact on poverty reduction is unknown. According to GSS (2014), using the 2010 poverty line of GH¢1,314, poverty in Ghana has reduced by 7.7 percent over a seven-year period (2005/2006 to 2012/13). As illustrated in Tables 2, 4, and 6, a proportionate increase in the enrolment into various educational levels in Ghana accompanies this reduction in the level of poverty. These actions leave the population more educated, knowledgeable and literate when compared to the 2005 enrolment figures.

In terms of extreme poverty in Ghana, the situation is similar. Though poverty has decreased from 16.5 percent in 2005 to 8.4 percent in 2010 (GSS, 2014). The actual figures indicate that more than 2.2 million Ghanaians (based on 2010 PHC projections) remain in extreme poverty. They cannot afford to feed themselves even when they spend all their income on food. The Ghanaian government rightly needs to continue this intense focus on education. As shown, the continued increases in school enrolment figures coupled with the fall in the rate of poverty testify to the effect of various policies on educational sector rolled out by the government of Ghana. Another way to explore the topic is via the incidence of poverty by level of education of household heads. For instance, in 2005/06, 44.3 percent of Ghanaians with no formal education were in poverty. This figure reduced to 37.6 percent poor in 2012/13 (see Table 7).

**Table 7.** Incidence of poverty by level of education of household heads in Ghana from 2005/6 to 2012/13

No education	BECE	SHS	Tertiary
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2005/06	2012/13	2005/06	2012/13	2005/06	2012/13	2005/06	2012/13
44.3%	37.6%	14.6%	15.7%	9.2%	8.0%	0.1%	3.0%

Source: 6<sup>th</sup> Ghana Living Standard Survey

In addition, the incidence of poverty among people with SHS education was less than that of people without any form of education. For instance in 2005/06, poverty among people with SHS certificates was 9.2 percent, less than 44.3 percent recorded for people with no formal education in that same year. Additionally, in 2012/13, the incidence of poverty among people with SHS education was 8.0 percent, also less than poverty among people without any formal education as shown in Table 7.

Furthermore, the incidence of poverty among people with tertiary educational backgrounds is less than people with no formal education. For example, whilst the incidence of poverty among people with tertiary education in 2005/06 and 2012/13 were 0.1 percent and 3.0 percent respectively, incidence of poverty among people with no formal education for that same period were 44.3 percent and 37.6 percent. From the data, the implementation of various education policies in Ghana increases the enrolment figures at the various levels of education. This leaves an individual, the household and the society as a whole more educated. As the level of education of individuals increases, the less vulnerable they become to poverty, illiteracy and inequality, leading to poverty reduction in the community.

#### *b. Incidence of poverty by employment status of household heads*

According to Kathryn et al. (2014), the employment status of individuals has a strong bearing on poverty outcomes since earnings from paid work constitute the largest source of income for most households. Hence, unemployment is strongly associated with poverty as workless unemployed families have by far the highest relative poverty rate (Kathryn et al., 2014). Based on these ideas, the research team used the incidence of poverty by employment status of the head of the household to show that various educational policies aimed at poverty

reduction indeed influences the rate of poverty in society as educated elites are most likely to have employment.

Table 8 shows that the incidence of poverty is very high among household heads in Ghana who are self-employed in the agricultural sector, dominated by peasant farming due to their limited knowledge in mechanised agriculture. This is because most of the self – employed in this sector have not benefited from any of the educational policies implemented by the government. However, household heads that are paid employees and have retired are less likely to be poor when compared to those self-employed in the agricultural sector. These latter groups of people are the direct beneficiaries of the educational policies of the government since they have completed the various levels of education.

For instance, self-employed Ghanaians in the agricultural sector are the poorest with an incidence of poverty of 45.1 percent and 39.2 percent in 2005/06 and 2012/13, respectively. Many reasons contribute to this scenario. Paramount among them is that people employed in the agricultural sector are mainly uneducated and lack the requisite skills in agricultural production. Consequently, they mainly adopt subsistence farming. In contrast, public sector employees in Ghana are required to have at least some minimum level of education. Their educational level ranges from the SHS to tertiary graduates who contribute to various roles in the development of the Ghanaian economy. Furthermore, people who entered the sector with low qualifications receive on-the-job training while going through the ranks to be the head of these institutions.

**Table 8.** Poverty incidence by employment status of household in Ghana 2005/06 to 2012/13

<b>Public</b>		<b>Private</b>		<b>Agriculture</b>		<b>Unemployed</b>		<b>Retired</b>	
05/06	12/13	05/06	12/13	05/06	12/13	05/06	12/13	05/06	12/13
9.0%	7.1%	14.3%	10.8%	45.1%	39.2%	20.0%	28.1%	9.1%	4.7%

*Source: 6<sup>th</sup> Ghana Living Standard Survey*

The data in Table 8 also demonstrates that the incidence of poverty among the public sector workers in Ghana is low when compared to the workers in the private, agriculture and unemployed categories. For instance, the Ghana Living Standard Survey 6 indicated that in 2005/06 and 2012/13, the incidence of poverty in the public sector in Ghana was 9.0 percent and 7.1 percent, respectively. In contrast, the incidence of poverty among the people employed in the Ghanaian agricultural sector is very high when compared to the people working in the private, public and the unemployed in Ghana. In 2005/2006 and 2012/2013, the sector recorded the highest incidence of poverty with 45.1 percent and 39.2 percent, respectively. The incidence of poverty among the unemployed in 2005/6 was 20.0 percent and, in 2012/13, the poverty incidence among the unemployed group increased to 28.1 percent. Several reasons accounts for these statistics. Among them are the percentage of the population employed by each sector and their level of education.

## **VII. Conclusions**

The research data in this case study demonstrates that the various policies on access to education implemented over the years yielded positive results. The level of educational attainment has invariably affected the level of poverty. As better access to education has resulted in increased enrolment at all levels of education since 2005/06. The annual Gross Domestic Production (GDP) growth rates of Ghana increased from 4.0 percent in 2005 to 15.0 percent in 2011 with the lowest growth rate recorded in 2009 and the highest in 2011 (GSS, 2014), indicating an inverse growth relationship between education and poverty. These figures indicate that the various educational policies implemented over the years in Ghana have yielded positive results. The decisions to expand educational access resulted in increased enrolment at all levels of education and higher levels of education for individuals. As shown, in the same period, a significant reduction in poverty took place.

Therefore, as Ghana and the rest of SSA continue to implement the various policies on access to education, this will simultaneously lead to poverty reduction as seen in the case of Ghana. Therefore, for SSA to reduce poverty, inequality and hunger, the continent needs to embark on progressive policies aimed at expanding the access of education. In Ghana, these include a significant emphasis on access to primary and secondary education by providing infrastructure, no-fee or free education and training for teachers at the various level of education.

In this exploration, the primary definition of poverty used centred on monetary income. That precludes other types of material wealth such as barter and growing one's own food. Thus, one area for future research is to have a more inclusive definition. Additionally, we recommend including qualitative and quantitative research on employment beyond the public sector. Potential areas to explore are job creation, business start-ups, entrepreneurial efforts, artist contributions and the like. This will allow for an expanded view of how people utilize their education.

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